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SCIENCE

FRIDAY, JULY 14, 1916

IDEALS OF CHEMICAL INVESTIGATION¹

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LESS than three centuries ago an outspoken student of nature sometimes faced the grim alternatives of excommunication, imprisonment, or death. To-day he no longer needs to conceal his thoughts in cryptic speech or mystic symbolism. Although the shadow of incomprehensibility may still darken the language of science, mystery is no longer necessary to protect the scientific investigator from persecution. The generally recognized value of the truth with his domain gives him the right to exist.

The courage needful for the task of addressing this august assembly on a topic concerning chemistry is, therefore, of a different order from the courage required for such a task in the days of Galileo. The problem to-day is not how to obscure the thought, but rather how to elucidate its inevitable complications.

Modern chemistry has had a manifold origin and tends toward a many-sided destiny. Into the fabric of this science men have woven the thought of ancient Greek philosophers, the magic of Arabian alchemists, the practical discoveries of artisans and ingenious chemical experimenters, the doctrine of physicists, the stern and unpromising logic of mathematicians, and the vision of metaphysical dreamers seeking to grasp truths far beyond the reach of mortal sense. The complex fabric enfolds the earth—indeed, the universe—with its far-reaching threads.

MSS. intended for publication and books, etc., intended for review should be sent to Professor J. McKeen Cattell, Garrison-on-Hudson, N. Y.

¹ Oration delivered before the Harvard Chapter of the Phi Beta Kappa in Sanders Theater, Cambridge, Mass., on June 19, 1916.